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ABSTRACT

Some of the leading concepts of phenomenology have direct relevance for the practice of adult education. Adults bring to the learning experience a vast stock of assimilated knowledge. Very important to the process is the notion of critical reflection as a constituent of this stock of knowledge--the knowledge is not merely stored but is judged and reflected upon and stored in conjunction with other experiences. Our concern in adult education for self-directed learning recognizes the prime importance of the adult's individual stock of knowledge, and points the way to an alternative approach which, at the present time, is being obsecured by the competency-based systems and pre-packed standardized curricula that are prescriptive in design and smack of conventional schooling. Where formal classes are not already under way, basic adult education can emerge as a distinctive component of a community development project relating to such neighborhood concerns as housing, transportation, child-care facilities, and so on. Another phenomenological concept useful for thinking about adult education is the "natural attitude." In the natural attitude we suspend all skepticism concerning the existence of the events and objects of the outer world. In adult literacy programs, participants begin to explore those aspects of their day-to-day activities that are normally taken for granted. "Intentionality," the notion that adult learners themselves bring meaning to an educational occasion, is a further endorsment of the commitment to client-centered and self-directed learning. Investigations into our own experiencing through reflexive inquiry can add immensely to our insights into the adult learning process. (KC)

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PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION:

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Michael Collins, Kansas State University.

According to Richard Zaner, author of The Way of Phenomenology, "the difficulties of introducing phenomenology are notorious, and quite sufficient to dissuade even the hardiest of souls."[1] And in a fundamental essay from the Collected Papers of Alfred Schutz, entitled "Some Leading Concepts in Phenomenology," readers are given notice that "an attempt to reduce the work of a great philosopher to a few basic propositions understandable to an audience not familiar with his thought is, as a rule, a hopeless undertaking."[2]

In view of these daunting caveats, one might justifiably ask whether it is at all feasible, within the confines of a single paper, to bring to bear phenomenological perspectives on the adult education enterprise. However, both Schutz and Zaner, despite their earnest qualifications with regard to the immensity of the task, have joined other outstanding students of Edmund Husserl's founding studies in the field in introducing their respective audiences to the impressive potential of phenomenological insights and methodology. Zaner tells us that "the sense of the phenomenological method is very much like that of the explorer when he turns to the task of where he has been and how he got there."[3] Provided the course is carefully mapped out, the way is open for others to extend the exploration. But first we have to launch off, fully aware of Husserl's intuitive grasp of how difficult it is to find the right beginning:

> In point of fact, the beginning is here the most difficult thing of all and the situation out of the ordinary. The new field does not lie spread before our gaze crowded with given products, so that we could simply grasp them.[4]

Notwithstanding these difficulties, our intention for the purpose at hand is to impart a sense of what phenomenology is about through an introduction to some of its leading concepts which have direct relevance for the practice of adult education. While taking care to avoid becoming overly technical, the level of investigation will be carried far enough to demonstrate that a phenomenological orientation offers us new prospects for research and practice. Examples from adult literacy training and program planning are incorporated to further substantiate the import of a phenomenological approach. Citations from thematic works of such original thinkers as Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schutz, John Dewey, and others should constitute a useful source of reference for further investigations along the lines set down in this paper and for embarking on phenomenological research on the various dimensions of adult education.

We do need to bear in mind that most of the following concepts have been dealt with in scholarly treatises, and all of them warrant further and deeper investigation than is undertaken in this paper. Of necessity, we are obliged to be selective in our descriptions. This is not to set them up as truncated accounts. Our treatment of them is expected to be adequate for demonstrating their inter-relationship with important themes and norms of adult education, giving us a more systematic framework on which to enact adult education practice and research.

Stock of Knowledge

The general tendency, among adult educators, to regard the vaster and richer background of experience which adults bring with them to the learning situation as the pre-eminent factor distinguishing adult education from childhood education has been graphically endorsed by Dewey:

> Every adult, irrespective of whether he is a man of science or not, carries in his head a large store of things known in virtue of earlier operations. When a new problem comes up, one habitually refers to what is already known to get a start in dealing with it. Such objects, until we have occasion to doubt them, are settled, assured.[5]

Very important for our present purposes is the notion of critical reflection as a constituent of the stock of knowledge. An aspect of the knowledge we assimilate, through a process of sedimentation, during our day-to-day experience in the life-world is a more adroit manner of broaching our problems. We try things out, and our projects meet with varying degrees of success or failure. These events, and their qualitative dimensions, are typically referred to by us in our subsequent projects. Our stock of knowledge is not merely a storehouse - or a bank, in Freirean terminology[6] - for an ever-growing quantity of recipes. The wherewithall to bring the appropriate recipes to bear on our projects, to make critical evaluation, is embedded within the stock of knowledge and is enhanced by subsequent sedimentation resulting from our on-going experience of the life-world.

The process of sedimentation has been described in the following terms:

> The process by which elements of knowledge, their interpretations and implications are integrated into the layers of previously acquired knowledge. The sedimented items are fused with existing typifications, etc., or form the core of new ones. Either way they become a person's habitual possessions." The "experiencing activities" of the human consciousness, then, constitute a person's stock of knowledge by way of sedimentation.[7]

With no problem we confront in the life-world are we in a complete state of not knowing. Within the sedimentation of our stock of knowledge there is some constituent which we can connect, however obliquely, with the projects before us.

The formation of our stock of knowledge is autobiographical - the sedimentation of our prior experiences. It is this autobiographical dimension which distinguishes each of us from all others. Our uniqueness as individuals is established by the chronological sequence of past experience as well as by the 'contents' of that experience. Both the 'contents' and the timing of our prior experiences come into play in every circumstance, and they are decisive in the way we endeavor to structure our situation in our day to day activities. The importance of the timing of our experiences as constituents of the stock of knowledge is alluded to by Schutz:

> All these experiences entered our stock of knowledge at hand, but their sedimentation shows a particular profile due to the time of their occurence (when and at what point of our development this knowledge was acquired).[8]

Our concern in adult education for self-directed learning recognizes the prime importance of the adult's individual stock of knowledge, and points the way to an alternative approach which, at the present time, is being obscured by the competency-based systems and pre-packaged standardized curricula which are prescriptive in design and smacks of conventional schooling.

The initial steps in any adult literacy program, then, entail a concerted effort to come to grips with the background experience of individual learners as well as the relevant dimensions of their community's stock of knowledge. The latter is equally important in planning adult learning situations since it enables us to identify more readily the sequence of experiences significant to the group qua group. In addition, there is a need for adult educators to become systematically aware of the extent to which their own background experience overlaps and differs from the background of their clients. Teachers of traditional A.B.E., G.E.D., and E.S.L. need not be daunted by this idea if they view it as a vital on-going aspect of the learning process which counters the barriers raised through the subtle ethnocentrism of pre-packaged, standardized curricula.

Where formal classes are not already under way, basic adult education can emerge as a distinctive component of a community development project relating to such neighborhood concerns as housing, transportation, child-care facilities, and so on. If the history of the community (its stock of knowledge) is manifested in an initial indifference to community development, various incitements (perhaps even the active promotion and organization of a popular film show) may be deployed to attract participants in the first instance. Of course, the community development techniques for achieving participation have to be contextually relevant and, even so, a number of approaches may have to be tried out before any measure of success is attained. In any event, the point at this stage is to indicate that adult education can play a vital part in this process from the outset of a community development process by bringing to light in a systematic fashion the appropriate background - stock of knowledge - of prospective clients. Such an awareness provides a foundation for the constitution of organized basic adult education from relevantly identified community problems.[9]

Ultimately, some participants may opt to undertake conventional A.B.E./GED type curricula, but the approach eschews the introduction of pre-determined, standardized, curricula on the sole initiative of the adult educator. Further, it dispenses with the application of the traditional needs' assessment instrument. Typically, the questions on a needs' assessment instrument are merely a reflection of the designer's stock of knowledge which fixes the limits of the inquiry. Their intent is to elicit a series of responses contrived by the designer of the instrument and, while the enunciation of such programmed responses represent an important dimension of setting goals and establishing the directions along which purposeful action can take place, they do not get at those motivations of adults which are embedded in their past experience.

We are distinguishing here between the identification of the 'in-order-to' motives of adults and their 'because motives' from which the latter emanate. Adult educators can identify the 'because' motives only through the 'face-to-face' relationship - that is, in context - while incorporating in the learning situation relevant aspects of the clients' existing stock of knowledge. The distinction between 'in-order-to' motives and 'because' motives has enormous significance for studies into motivation, participation, and program planning in adult education.[10]

A commitment to the notion of self-directed learning does entail continuing investigation of the constituting sedimentary processes within the adult's stock of knowledge. We need to be alert to how self-directed learning activities emerge and how they are brought to an acceptable conclusion in terms of the acquisition of sufficient knowledge to meet the problem at hand.

Life-World and the Natural Attitude

The life-world is the arena for all direct experiences of human beings. It is an ontological given. Like the natural world, our social world transcends us. We are born into a pre-organized social world which will survive us. From the outset, it is a world we share with other human beings, acting individually and in groups, pursuing their various purposes. While it imposes limitations on what we can do, our life-world, like the natural world, is modified by our projects of action. According to Schutz:

> The life-world, simply, is the whole sphere of everyday experiences, orientations, and actions through which individuals pursue their interests and affairs by manipulating objects, dealing with people, conceiving plans and carrying them out.[11]

We are referring to the everyday world of the normal wide-awake adult.

For the most part, however, in our routine day-to-day activities, we adopt the mental stance of the natural attitude. We tend to take them for granted rather than posing them as problematic. It is essentially a pragmatic, accepting stance which we often characterize as being "realistic."

> In the natural attitude, I always find myself in a world which is for me taken for granted and self-evidentially "real." I was born into it and I assume that it existed before me. It is the unexplained ground of everything given in my experience, as it were, the taken-for-granted frame in which all the problems which I must overcome are placed. This world appears to me in coherent arrangements of well-circumscribed objects having determinate properties.[12]

In the natural attitude we suspend all scepticism concerning the existence of the events and objects of the outer world. Taking them for granted, we refrain from all possible doubt that the world and its objects could be otherwise than they appear to us.

In our adult literacy program, participants begin to explore those aspects of their day-to-day activities which are normally taken for granted. A deliberate effort is made to set aside temporarily all presuppositions learners have of the events and happenings of their day-to-day lives. By focussing, within the learning context, on those occurences of community life which have previously been experienced in a taken-for-granted manner, we make them problematic. The reality of the life-world of the community and its individual members is not denied, but temporarily "put into brackets." In this manner, themes are constituted which form the content for an on-going literacy program. Curriculum materials are either created within the adult learning context or are relevantly selected to meet the immediate purpose at hand.

The process we are describing is akin to that adopted with impressive results by Paulo Freire, except that it avoids the anomalous position of incorporating a deterministic Marxist interpretation of historical development within a program to empower adult learners through a broader conception of literacy training. A deterministic Marxist interpretation of the life-world is just as questionable from our perspective as the determinism of behavioristic assumptions on which standardized curricula are based. Devising learning strategies suggested by the act of 'bracketing' and the phenomenological device of 'epoché,' entailing a temporary suspension of unquestioning acceptance of the ontological characteristics of everyday experience, the adult educator is able to create a learning environment in which a greater understanding is acquired of those structures in the community which detract from or enhance the quality of everyday living. In taking a deliberate stance towards these structures, in determining whether to transform them or leave them alone, adult learners are identifying their situationally concrete interest at hand, thus providing the basis for contextually relevant programming.

Our conduct within the life-world, as we have intimated, is circumscribed by our stock of knowledge. We cannot interpret our experiences of this life-world, define our immediate situations, or make plans of action without recourse to our stock of knowledge. Our life-world situations are episodes in our on-going experience. No two people can possibly experience the same situation in the same way. These remarks, of course, can be applied to the experience of groups.

In order to realize our purposes, we work upon and modify the life-world. To this extent it is the object of our projects of actions. It offers resistence to our acts, presents obstacles, which we have either to overcome or to which we have to concede. The projects of others constitute a major part of the resistance with which we have to contend. Schutz explains that "world, in this sense, is something we have to modify by our actions or that modifies our actions."[13] The everyday life-world, then, is that aspect of reality in which adults can engage themselves and which they can change while operating within it by means of purposive action. A thorough-going analysis of the structures of the life-world is fundamental to a phenomenology of adult education.

Multiple Realities

The life-world is our fundamental and paramount reality, but within it no two people experience the same situation in exactly the same way. Moreover,

experiences which are readily accessible to some of us, or within our potential reach, are outside the reach of others. There are many different orders of reality. We confer the accent of reality upon them and make of them finite provinces of meaning. All experiences emanating from a finite province of meaning are indicative of a particular style of lived experience which can be characterized as a cognitive style. In our capacity as adult educators, we are well advised to be constantly alert to the implications of bringing to bear our own cognitions of the life-world onto the meaning structures of our clients different orders of reality and cognitive styles.

There is every justification, from what we have previously shown, for suggesting that standardized curricula, characterized by competency-based systems, are representative of their compilers' interpretation of the life-world from the perspective of the natural attitude. There is a certain complacency in identifying coping skills for those who do not perform adequately, measuring up to our standards, in the world as we envision it. It diverts our attention from reflecting upon the structures of that life-world, including the phenomenon of multiple realities, and on our own conscious experiences within it.

In the basic adult education context, participants can be encouraged, through bracketing of the natural attitude, to turn their attention to the nature of other orders of reality while gaining increased insight into those structures of their own life-world which are experienced either as impositions or as supporting their projects of action. This presents them with further possibilities for purposive action and enhances the overall literacy program.

As an upshot of our descriptions of the life-world in this study, we are advocating that those of us who purport to be adult educators have a responsibility to explore carefully the structures of our clients' order of reality, from their perspective as well as our own. Such an orientation applies to our dealings with professional groups as much as it does in our work with poor and semi-literate adults. When we put into question our own life-world perspectives, emanating from our prevailing personal life-plans, the likelihood that we will impose inappropriate pre-conceived views of what others should or should not learn is lessened. This entails adopting for ourselves, and encouraging in adult learners, a commitment to systematic doubting - a willingness to suspend the taken-for-granted posture of the natural attitude. Our purpose is to bring about a greater understanding of the structures of our life-world, of its distinguishable realities, and of how the accent of reality is stamped upon it. Purposeful action to modify the life-world can emanate from such an understanding.

We are suggesting an approach to adult learning which calls for a tolerance of constant search - of invention and re-invention - as preferable to the certainty of narrowly conceived prescriptive formulations. In challenging the complacency which emerges from our day-to-day living in the natural attitude, we are a long way apart from the deterministic perspective of competency-based systems and pre-packaged curricula.

Typicality

From the outset, our experience of the everyday world takes place in terms of typification. Events and objects are not merely experienced in their uniqueness. They are not given to us in isolation. We find within them reference to experiences of similar sorts of things within our stock of knowledge. The inner and outer horizons of our affairs carry recognizable forms and their idealizations.

> We do not experience the world as a sum of sense data, nor as an aggregate of individual things isolated from and standing in no relation to one another. We do not see colored spots and contours, but rather mountains, trees, animals.[14]

For all our life-world situations there can be traced within our socially derived knowledge - that which is handed down and accepted on authority - typical recipes for typical problems and typical attitudes to guide typical behavior. These are held within our stock of knowledge in varying modes of familiarity. Some of our previous experiences are clear and distinct while others are vague and intermingled with suppositions and prejudices.

Typifications originate in a context where there is some end in view. Our immediate interest, the problem at hand emerging from a field of unproblematic familiarity, determines which typical traits or ingredients are to be brought to bear in a situation and which are to be disregarded.

> All typification is relative to some problem: there is no type at large but only types which carry an "index" to a problem.[15]

To be adequately familiar with the dimensions of a problem entails having accumulated within the stock of knowledge typifications sufficient for the purpose at hand. The sense that we "can do it again" and the expectation of future experiences based upon the idealization of the "and so forth" derives from typifications sedimented within our stock of knowledge.

It is apparent from what has been said about typicality, that we rarely, if ever, find ourselves entirely without recourse to some aspects of our past experience which can be brought to bear on a situation. So the rejection of pre-packaged curricula and pre-determined formulations does not mean that we are perpetually starting from scratch when it comes to planning adult education programs. Neither is it an intimation that we are opting for an arbitrary or laissez-faire approach in preference to systematic preparation, thoughtful presentation, and continuing evaluation.

Relevant typifications emerge as soon as there is some end in view. Whether we are planning a learning project for ourselves or, in our capacity as adult educator, a series of learning activities for others, we refer to our stock of knowledge for ingredients which are applicable to the project at hand. If a current project confronts us with a large expanse of unfamiliar terrain, then we tend to consult individuals well versed in the field and other appropriate resources. However, from the outset our reference to typified elements in our stock of knowledge provides us with an index. Throughout the entire process, we make judgments about what is appropriate for the task at hand.

For example, if we are asked, in our role as adult educator, to undertake responsibility for a learning experience for which we do not have much experience, we determine who to consult for advice and which resource materials are most suitable for our purposes. The typifications which we bring to bear from our stock of knowledge and that of others in designing our plan of action is determined by the inter-play of relevant structures of previous sedimentations. Reference to the typically relevant experiences of participants, of course, continues throughout the learning situation and is indicative of what aspect of the initial plan - curriculum - requires modification.

With the onset of competency-based systems and prescriptive standardized curricula, we tend to forego the process of identifying those pertinent typicalities which indicate, in accordance with the structures of relevance, the direction to be taken by the project in hand. Viewed in this light, it is the competency-based approach which bears the stigma of arbitrariness. We might recommend competency-based systems and standardized curricula on the basis that they make the task of the educator easier in providing instant recipes for the generation of busy work. However, our concern is with the systematic planning, in context, of adult learning experiences which call for purposeful engagement and an anticipation that, typically, contingencies of some educational significance for participants will arise.

In a basic adult education setting, all this necessitates taking care to identify the typically relevant ingredients of learners' past experience for their projects in hand. Rather than bringing to bear definitive and prescriptive formulations - in the name of 'coping skills' - learning projects are derived from the immediate context, establishing further typifications for future deployment. There is surely something remiss when adult educators forego the challenge of engaging themselves and their clients as the major resource in designing their own learning projects. The systematic formulation of learning projects arising from typified ingredients which point the way, via purposive planning, to available resources requires effort and is sometimes difficult. But it is the best we can do.

Intentionality

> The terminologocal expression for designating the basic being as consciousness, as consciousness of something, is intentionality.[16]

Husserl considered intentionality to be the central insight into his phenomenological analysis of consciousness and the outstanding topic of phenomenological research. All of our experiences as they manifest themselves within our stream of consciousness, are referred to the object or event experienced. Thought, expectations, fears do not exist as such. Every thought is thought of, every expectation is expectation of, every fear is fear of the entity that is thought, expected, feared. I am always conscious of something. What appears to me in reflection is the intentional object which I have thought of, which I expect, which I fear, and so on. Not only is my experience characterized by the fact that it is a consciousness, but it is simultaneously determined by the object to which my consciousness refers.

> Anything that can exist, and be this or that, for him (accordingly, that can have sense for him as existent and as being this or that) must be something of which he has consciousness in the shape of an appertinent intentional performance, which corresponds to the particularity of that existent; it must be something of which he is conscious by virtue of an appertinent sense-bestowing.[17]

Reference to an object is indispensable to all our mental processes. If we take the term act in a broad enough sense to encompass experiences of undergoing as well as doing, psychic phenomena are always conceived as acts.

> The term "intentional" names peculiarity of intention, the reference to something objective. As a briefer expression the word act is used.[18]

My acts, then, are always distinguished by directedness to an object. Intentionality expresses simultaneously the relational property of having an intention and being aimed at by an intention.

> To recognize the presence of intentionality is to realize the difference between, on the one hand, the act and the operation of thought, and, on the other, the object which this thought "intends."[19]

The properties of the constituting act are different from those of the intentional object.

Intentionality objectivates by connecting the data of our stream of consciousness to the intended object. It is via these data that intended objects are given to us. Only that aspect intended is immediately apprehended. We can never have a complete grasp of an object, event, in its entirety and all at once. Ultimately, we may be able to intuit the other constituents, but they cannot be apprehended - in their entirety and spontaneously - by the single intending act.

However, without the organizing function which intentionality ascribes to our act, we would be overwhelmed by an unmanageable flood of perceptions. As it is, we can bring to bear a variety of data to identified objects within our life-world. According to Herbert Spiegelberg:

> Intention supplies the synthetic function by which the various aspects, perspectives, and stages of an object are all focussed upon, and integrated into, identical cores.[20]

We are referred, through our intendings, to related aspects of the intended objects and to other related objects. The line I am writing on, for instance, refers to the page and to the pad which contains it, and so on. Intentionality then has a connecting function. Spiegelberg writes:

> It gives rise to legitimate expectations for further experiences, which may or may not be fulfilled in the further development of our experience, yet are clearly foreshadowed in what is given.[21]

The intended object is not conceived as an already existing entity which awaits the act of intending. It emerges from the intending act. Our intendings are operative in the constitution of intended objects and events. They bestow meaning on them.

From the foregoing account, we can see that the basic structures of intentionality set forth an entirely different perspective to that of behaviorism. Rather than restricting attention to the overt behavior of others, to their bodily movements, intentional analysis enjoins us to uncover the meaning and consequences of our actions and to explore the active participation of the ego in the ordering of our experience. An observation by Husserl with regard to the potentiality which surrounds all our immanent experience is instructive in this context:

> I can question every intentional event, which means that I can penetrate and display its horizons. In doing this I disclose, on the one hand, potentialities of my existence, and on the other I clarify the intended meaning of objective reference.[22]

Intentionality refers us to purposive experiencing (consciousing) of events in which individuals bestow meaning on their activities.

> I am not conscious of myself or others. I <u>conscious</u> myself and others. I actively <u>intend</u> myself and them. The implications of this view are crucial in any philosophy of education.[23]

For behaviorism, consciousness is a product of external events. We are conscious in the sense of being under stimulus control. Purpose or intention is merely the bodily manifestation of reinforcement received from the environment.

The notion that adult learners themselves bring meaning to an educational occasion is a further endorsement of the commitment to client-centered and self-directed learning. It casts adult educators as facilitators rather than as intermediaries between learners as passive recipients and the contingencies of the environment. The initial plan of action for a learning project is not intended to bring early foreclosure on the course of events. Rather, from the perspective we are advocating, one of the outstanding features of its design is to provide a setting in which the modalities of intentionality can emerge. From the outset, there is a recognition that knowing and action are not separate events. This entails some tolerance of ambiguity on the part of adult educators who are denied the security of sensing that they themselves have within their immediate reach the essential 'course content' prior to the onset of the learning project. They have to evince a readiness to modify the original plan in accordance with events emerging from the relevant interest and purposes of the participants. The ingredients for the curriculum in a community-based literacy program are readily derived from the identification and articulation of these interests.

Where the intentionality of the curriculum designers tends to take precedence, there is less opportunity for the enhancement of self-directed learning. This is the case with competency-based systems, curriculum designed for mandatory continuing education, and adult classes where participants are attracted by financial inducements. The life-world views of the

education specialists and their intentions have already been legitimized within the curricula by the time they are encountered by adult learners. However, in failing to generate critical engagement such curricula are thwarting, to a large extent, the purpose of the designers to engender designated commitments and an orientation towards personal responsibility for standards of performance on the part of adult learners.

A keener assessment of the inter-relationship between the roles of adult learner, adult educator, and the curriculum within a learning situation should precede further implementation of compulsory adult education and the imposition of standardized curricula, backed by the inducement of a guaranteed minimum income, on the poor. This offers a fertile territory for careful investigations.

Critical Reflection

Our all too brief treatment of the concept of intentionality underscored the paramount importance of reflection for the phenomenological method. Reflection as an observing of the mind and its operations incorporates the object reflected upon as well as the reflecting itself.

According to Schutz, we do not grasp the meaning of an action while we are caught up in its performance. Rather we turn back upon the flow of the action to capture its meaning in reflective advertence.

> The very awareness of the stream of duration pre-supposes a turning-back against the stream, a special kind of attitude toward that stream, a "reflection", as we will call it.[24]

In order to understand the meaning of my experiences, I have to pause, as it were, and glance backward on my acting.

In his analysis of how we constitute meaningful experience within our own stream of consciousness, Schutz deploys Bergson's concept of the durée which distinguishes between the flowing experiences of our mental life and the discrete discontinuous entities of the spatio-temporal world. Within the inner time of the durée, our imminent experiences overlap with those of the past, through recollection and retention, and those of the future, through protentions and anticipations.

In the everyday life of the natural attitude only the ego's "attention to life," in organizing our perceptions, prevents our being overwhelmed by the enormity of the flux of events. However, we discover, through a switch to the other level of consciousness brought about by a turning back against the stream of duration, that what formerly appeared as sharply defined and separate entities have been replaced by a "coming-to-be" and "passing away" which lack clear-cut boundaries.

> And so Bergson concludes that all distinctions, all attempts to "separate out" individual experiences from one unity of duration, are artificial, i.e. alien to the pure duree, and all attempts to analyze process are merely cases of carrying over spatio-temporal modes of representation to the radically different durée.[25]

Only as we become aware of the passing flux, through a reflective glance, are we able to grasp the meaning of our experiences.

> When, by my act of reflection, I turn my attention to my living experience, I am no longer taking up my position within the stream of pure duration, I am no longer simply living within that flow. The experiences are apprehended, distinguished, brought into relief, marked out from one another: the experiences which were constituted as phases within the flow of duration now become objects of attention as constituted experiences.[26]

Although meaning is ascribed to our actions in the past tense, it is not to be inferred that our on-going acts cannot be meaningful. They are based upon a preconceived project that endows them with meaning. The project itself is conceived in the future perfect tense - as that which will have been done, the act which will have been performed. Projecting, then, is anticipative reflection. It gives meaning to our on-going acts even though this meaning is grasped only in a retrospective inspection envisaging the performed project in terms of empty anticipations which may or may not have been fulfilled. Herein lies an important distinction between action and behavior.

> Action then is behavior in accordance with a plan of projected behavior; and the project is neither more nor less than the action itself conceived and decided upon in the future perfect tense. Thus the project is the primary and fundamental meaning of the action. (However) the meaning attributed to an experience varies according to one's whole attitude at the moment of reflection. When an action is completed, its original meaning as given in the project will be modified in the light of what has been actually carried out, and then is open to an indefinite number of reflections which can ascribe meaning to it in the past tense.[27]

We can rehearse our projects as a kind of experiment and carry them through to completion in our imagination reflecting on the constituting acts in modes of past tense and future perfect tense. Dewey expresses the process in the following terms:

> The experiment is carried on by tentative rehearsals in thought which do not affect physical facts outside the body. Thought runs ahead and foresees outcomes, and thereby avoids having to await the instruction of actual failure and disaster.[28]

Hence, I may rehearse a number of projects in my imagination before committing myself to a particular line of conduct.

An emphasis on critical reflection as an on-going evaluative dimension of adult learning activities brings an entirely new perspective to program planning. In reflecting, we become aware of how the original meaning of a project is modified by ensuing acts and actions. This pre-empts the notion that a project can be sufficiently circumscribed by a number of definitive behavioral objectives prior to involvement of the participants. Attempts to grasp the meaning of what has transpired in the project by retroactive

reference to the initially prescribed behavioral objectives only adds to the artificiality of such an approach. Presuming that we can know at the outset what is to be experienced before the project begins, it fails to account for significant meaning changes and intervening events. Dewey's insight is instructive in this context:

> Standards and tests of validity are found in the consequences of overt activity, not in what is fixed prior to it and independent of it.[29]

A reflective attitude allows for the fact that all our undertakings are, to some extent or other, explorations during which we inevitably encounter novel situations. These take us beyond pre-delineated eventualities and the familiar constituents of previous experience, opening up further possibilities for purposive action.

As for participants in adult literacy programs, our analysis entails rejecting the technicism characteristic of standardized curricula in favor of enhancing critical reflection on their day-to-day projects. They are empowered to seek for themselves the necessary means and resources and, in this manner, begin to acquire the autonomy which, typically, literate adults bring to their life-world.

Through anticipative reflection we can systematically engage in futuristic studies in adult education. Reflection in the future perfect tense, as we have shown, permits us to experiment with all manner of possible future projects, weighing their consequences and referring them back to relevant typifications of past experiencing. The process is deliberative and reminds us that we can have a hand in determining future events. From this perspective, our subsequent behavior is planned rather than determined by forces external to ourselves. The scenarios of the futurist are, in effect, projected plans of action conceived in the future perfect tense. In this regard, adult education faces a challenge to make futurists of us all through facilitating a learning society in which reflective inquiry is preferred to the prescriptive formulations of standardized curricula.

In a more immediate sense, investigations into our own experiencing through reflexive inquiry can add immensely to our insights into the adult learning process. Reflections on the various modes in which we experience the events of our life-world can yield reports of substantial consequence for those concerned with adult counselling and adult psychology. It would entail a temporary suspension (bracketing), at least, of those established concepts through which we interpret the flow of mental events. However, from direct reference to our own modes of experiencing and those of our contemporaries can emerge a more penetrating discernment of the aging processes and adult learning.

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